

Heriot-Watt Action Plan to Implement the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Heriot-Watt's action plan that has been developed to implement the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Concordat). The report is submitted to the University Committee for Research and Innovation in the first instance, and then to be sent to the University Court in line with the requirements of the Concordat.

The report provides an overview of the Concordat, our responsibilities and how it fits with our existing HR Excellence in Research Award. It then outlines our action plans to implement the Concordat and reviews the progress we have made in these areas during the first year.

Introduction

The Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers (the Concordat), is a framework to support the career development of researchers and the research environment in which they are employed.

The original Concordat was launched in summer 2008. In 2018, an independent review was undertaken, and a revised Concordat was published in September 2019 to respond to changes in the research environment since the original document was developed. Heriot-Watt University became a signatory of the new Concordat in April 2020. In doing so, Heriot-Watt has confirmed its ongoing commitment to the career development of researchers within the University, as well as contributing to sector-wide initiatives to promote and implement good-practice.

The Concordat sets out an agreement between stakeholders across three clear principles: 'Environment and Culture', 'Employment' and 'Professional and Career Development'. It outlines the obligations for the four key stakeholder groups: Funders, Institutions, Researchers and Managers of Researchers to realise the aims of the Concordat. The primary aims are to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and its economy.

The recruitment, retention and development of excellent researchers is vital in helping us achieve our ambitions to be at the forefront of academic endeavour that makes an outstanding impact on society. Researchers benefit from a strong research culture by being part of a vibrant, diverse and globally mobile researcher community, having access to high quality career and professional development, and being recognised and valued for their contribution to world-leading research.

The Concordat principles align well with Heriot-Watt's strategic aims of Excelling in Research and Enterprise, and Building Flourishing Communities. The initiatives contained within the *Enhancing Excellence* strand are designed to grow the pioneering work we already do by supporting all our research staff to develop their skills and expertise within a framework of promoting excellence, extending our capacity to undertake world leading research by recruiting excellent new colleagues and developing our research culture by sharing good practice across our organisation. We aim to support our researchers by promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its forms across our locations, embedding a culture of listening and engagement, and encouraging lifelong learning and personal development.

Further information, including a copy of the current Concordat, can be downloaded from the Vitae website:

[Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#)

Concordat Signatory responsibilities

1. Raise the visibility of the Concordat and champion its Principles within their organisation at all levels.
2. Identify a senior manager champion and associated group with relevant representation from across the organisation with responsibility for annual review and reporting on progress.
3. For organisations employing researchers, ensure that they are formally represented in developing and monitoring organisational efforts to implement the Concordat Principles.
4. Undertake a gap analysis to compare their policies and practice against the Concordat Principles.
5. Draw up and publish an action plan within a year of signing the Concordat.
6. Set up processes for systematically and regularly gathering the views of researchers they fund or employ, to inform and improve the organisation's approach to and progress on implementing the Concordat.
7. Produce an annual report to their governing body or equivalent authority, which includes their strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plan and progress, which subsequently is publicly available.

Heriot -Watt's HR Excellence in Research Accreditation

Heriot-Watt was among the first UK universities to receive the European Commission's award for HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) in September 2010 and has been accredited every two years since then, with the latest award being received in Autumn 2020. The award recognised the positive actions we have taken to support the career development of researchers and our ongoing commitment to the principles of the Concordat. In committing to both the Concordat and HREiR initiatives, we are underlining our continued support for our researchers (as outlined in the HREiR action plans to date), as well as the wider requirements of the Concordat in contributing to sector-wide initiatives to improve researcher opportunities and experiences.

The most recent HREiR action plan is based on the principles and obligations outlined in the revised Concordat. Key activities from this plan have been incorporated into a Concordat Action Plan, one of the key signatory requirements. This helps us align the activities being undertaken across the University in support of researcher development.

Concordat Action Plan

In July 2021 we published our 2-year Concordat Action Plan. The plan outlined a set of actions to close the gaps in achieving our signatory responsibilities.

The implementation of the Action Plan is managed by the Research Futures Academy within the Research Engagement Directorate in collaboration with relevant stakeholders under the direction of

the Concordat Implementation Group. Annual reporting is via the University Committee for Research and Innovation.

2020-21 actions are summarised below with Green or Amber indicators showing progress against these actions. There are no Red areas for 2021.

A more detailed action plan showing actions taken, progress and outstanding actions is shown at Appendix 1. This includes the full two year programme. Actions with a deadline for September 2022 will be undertaken during the 2021-22 academic year and reported to UCRI in the next annual report.

Action Plan Headline: & Concordat Theme	Task/Action	Timescale	Action lead
Awareness of Concordat and its Principles			
Environment & Culture	Improve awareness of Concordat principles and related actions, responsibilities and benefits, with stakeholders including senior management, institutional leads, managers of researchers and researchers themselves. Deliverables: Dedicated self service resources available on staff intranet. Develop annual programme of information sessions for stakeholders. Establish a Concordat Implementation Group	Sep 2021	RED
Progress Indicator 	While information relating to the Concordat is available, further work is needed to support researchers, managers and other HWU staff in gaining awareness of the Concordat and the related activities, responsibilities and benefits. This will be a priority for the newly formed Concordat Implementation Group		
Research Culture			
Environment & Culture	Enhance excellence in research culture through creation of networks and environments to support interdisciplinary collaboration for researcher community Deliverable Annual Festival of Research and Enterprise Establish Bicentennial Research Leaders network	Sep 2021	RED
Progress Indicator 	Achieved		

Contractual arrangements			
Employment	Undertake project to assess viability of moving to greater use of open ended (with funding end dates) contracts. Deliverable: Full plan in place.	Sep 2021	HR
Progress Indicator 	Achieved		
Support for Managers of Researchers			
Employment Environment and Culture	Ensure excellence in people and team management through transparency of responsibilities, relevant training and monitoring of practices. (eg Supporting our Researchers, Role of the People Manager programmes and PDR Reviewer/Reviewee development programmes) Deliverable: Enhanced self-service resources based on development programmes PDR Reviewer Roadshows PDR conversations	Sep 2021	HR & RED
Progress Indicator 	The range of development resources and signposting on Sharepoint is to be further developed. This will be undertaken by Research Futures Academy staff with support from colleagues across RED and wider HWU PDR Reviewer Roadshows undertaken. The process for logging of PDR conversations on new ERP system to be fully in place by September 2022 following next annual round of PDR conversations.		
Representation and engagement			

Environment & Culture	Review formal and informal mechanisms for representation and engagement for early career researchers at local and institutional level Deliverable: Reestablished Postdoc Forum programme with appropriate funding Identification of research staff representatives at School level for Research Staff Forum Representation at University Committee for Research and Innovation Research staff results from HWU Staff Survey 2021 and CEDARS survey reported to UCRI Increased participation and engagement from ECR community in staff surveys (Spring 2022)	Sep 2021	RED HR University and School management
Progress Indicator 	Support to be provided by Research Futures Academy to peer led Postdoc Forum to reestablish programme of networking events following furlough and remote working phases for many researchers. Representative for UCRI to be identified from newly appointed School Reps for first meeting of 2022. Report on Staff Survey results for ECRs to be developed to focus on specific actions for this group. Further actions to be develop to encourage participation in surveys and other feedback/consultation mechanisms		

Appendix 1 – Concordat Action Plan 2020-22

The action plan for 2020–2022 sets out the key priorities for addressing the aims of the Concordat, and indicates high-level approaches for how we might implement them. Further detail on support for the Career Development of Researchers can be found in our HR Excellence in Research Action Plans for the period 2020-22. A number of the deliverables will be shared to inform sector-wide actions and initiatives.

Action Plan Headline: & Concordat Theme	Task/Action	Timescale	Action lead
Awareness of Concordat and its Principles			
Environment & Culture	Improve awareness of Concordat principles and related actions, responsibilities and benefits, with stakeholders including senior management, institutional leads, managers of researchers and researchers themselves. Deliverables: Dedicated self service resources available on staff intranet. Develop annual programme of information sessions for stakeholders. Establish a Concordat Implementation Group	Sep 2021	RED
Progress as at Sep 2021	Concordat information developed for RFA Sharepoint pages Concordat information sent to Directors of Research and presented to Postdoc Reps at ‘Research Staff Forum’ meetings Information session planned within HWU Festival of Research and Enterprise (October 2021) Local sessions offered to Directors of Research Concordat Implementation Group established with representation from key stakeholder groups.		
Progress Indicator 	While the information is available, further work is needed to support researchers, managers and other HWU staff in gaining awareness of the Concordat and the related activities, responsibilities and benefits. This will be a priority for the Concordat Implementation Group		

Research Culture			
Environment & Culture	Enhance excellence in research culture through creation of networks and environments to support interdisciplinary collaboration for researcher community Deliverable Annual Festival of Research and Enterprise Establish Bicentennial Research Leaders network	Sep 2021	RED
Progress as at Sep 2021	Annual Festival of Research and Enterprise 13-21 October 2021. Programme expanded from previous years. Bicentennial Research Leaders network established.		
Progress Indicator 			
Contractual arrangements			
Employment	Undertake project to assess viability of moving to greater use of open ended (with funding end dates) contracts. Deliverable: Full plan in place.	Sep 2021	HR
Progress as at Sep 2021	Open ended (with funding end date) contracts being issued for all new contracts > 18 months from September 2021		
Progress Indicator 			

Support for Managers of Researchers			
Employment Environment and Culture	Ensure excellence in people and team management through transparency of responsibilities, relevant training and monitoring of practices. (eg Supporting our Researchers, Role of the People Manager programmes and PDR Reviewer/Reviewee development programmes) Deliverable: Enhanced self-service resources based on development programmes PDR Reviewer Roadshows PDR conversations	Sep 2021	HR & RED
Progress as at Sep 2021	Initial level of development resources added to RFA Sharepoint pages Role of the Manager resources available on HR Sharepoint PDR Reviewer Roadshows undertaken within Schools by Vice Principal and Global Director of HR. Introduction of new ERP system has delayed recording of PDR stats.		
Progress Indicator 	Range of development resources and signposting on Sharepoint to be further developed. This will be undertaken by Research Futures Academy staff with support from colleagues across RED and wider HWU Process for logging of PDR conversations on new ERP system to be fully in place by September 2022 following next annual round of PDR conversations.		
Representation and engagement			
Environment & Culture	Review formal and informal mechanisms for representation and engagement for early career researchers at local and institutional level Deliverable: Reestablished Postdoc Forum programme with appropriate funding Identification of research staff representatives at School level for Research Staff Forum Representation at University Committee for Research and Innovation Research staff results from HWU Staff Survey 2021 and CEDARS survey reported to UCRI Increased participation and engagement from ECR community in staff surveys (Spring 2022)	Sep 2021	RED HR University and School management

Progress as at Sep 2021	Postdoc Forum activity limited during lockdown and remote working period. Funding for Postdoc Forum carried over from previous year as activity was suspended during lockdown. Research Staff School Reps appointed and attending Research Staff Forum meeting.		
Progress Indicator 	Support to be provided by Research Futures Academy to peer led Postdoc Forum to reestablish programme of networking events. Representative for UCRI to be identified from Postdoc groups for first meeting of 2022. Report on Staff Survey results for ECRs to be developed to focus on specific actions for this group. Further actions to be develop to encourage participation in surveys and other feedback/consultation mechanisms		
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion			
Environment & Culture	Ensure that Concordat related actions are aligned with EDI initiatives and outcomes and are linked to other initiatives and workstreams including the Disability Inclusion Scientific Careers (DISC) project, British Sign Language Local Plan Working Group (BSLLP), Athena SWAN, Technicians Charter and Wellbeing agenda. Deliverables: Monitor and report on results from HWU and CEDARS surveys for EDI related questions	Sep 2022	HR/RED
Career development			

Professional and Career Development	Establish a dedicated Sharepoint presence for Research Staff with relevant information, signposting and resources for career and professional development. Resources will be developed in conjunction with established research staff representatives and TU's via the Research Staff Forum and Postdoc Forum. Deliverables: Dedicated online resources and communications channels for research staff including • Induction/settling in packs • PDR resources • Links to wellbeing resources and support • Mandatory training and wider development resources • Concordat and HR Excellence in Research action plans • Career development opportunities	Sep 2022	RED/HR
Career pathways and opportunities			
Professional and Career Development	Establish online information for Research Staff demonstrating the range of career paths with related case studies. Resources will be developed in conjunction with established research staff representatives and TU's via the Research Staff Forum and Postdoc Forum Deliverables: Career pathways information and case studies Enterprise support Expand opportunities for experiencing internal peer reviewing Support for team-working, management and leadership skills Fellowship college/practice sharing/internal peer reviewing sessions	Sep 2022	RED/HR
Research Staff Origin and Destination Data:			

Employment	Develop better understanding of research staff mobility and employment experience through improved data on career origin and destination Deliverables: • Report on research staff employment experience • Improved process for data collection (at point of joining and leaving), monitoring and reporting • Improved recruitment/leavers processes	Sep 2022	HR
Research Staff Population Data:			
Environment and Culture and Employment	Develop better understanding of research staff population from improved data on • ED&I • Length of service/no of contracts • Career history and destinations • Career progression Deliverables: • Report on research staff population data • Improved process for data collection, monitoring and reporting	Sep 2022	HR
Training			
Professional and Career Development	Include reference to '10 days training' aim for research staff in relevant policies and guidance. Opportunities in other sectors, leadership, team-working etc. Deliverables: Develop definition and examples of training for inclusion in recruitment, development and PDR documentation. Establish learning logs for all staff (Wave 3 of new HR system 'ERP')	Sep 2022	RED/HR